**Purpose**

To provide high quality learning opportunities for all students by supplementing government funds with approved financial payments contributions from parents; and to ensure that parents are fully informed of payments requested by Kew East Primary School and their responsibilities for the payment of them.

**Policy Guidelines**

School Council has a responsibility to ensure that a high standard of education is maintained through the provision of materials, equipment and facilities. Programs will be funded by the DEECD through the Student Resource Package (SRP), parent payments and other locally raised funds.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (DEECD) Parent Payments Policy:

- School Council supplements DEECD funds by requesting payments from parents for the following items:
  - **Essential education items** are those used in the course of instruction in the standard curriculum program which parents/guardians are responsible for and may choose to either provide or pay the school to provide. They include materials that the individual student takes possession of, materials for learning, photocopying, and essential services such as costs associated with camps and excursions, which all students are expected to attend such as transport and entrance costs.

  - **Optional extras** are provided in addition to the standard curriculum program and are offered to all students. They are provided on a user-pays basis and if parents/guardians choose to access them for students, they will be required to pay for them. These items include instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program. This also includes extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the curriculum, including Level 4 graduation dinner and year book, music tutorials, band, school-based performances, productions and events.

  - **Voluntary financial contributions** are contributions made by parents and guardians of a student enrolled at the school which are used for the following purposes:
    - Contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school (e.g. equipment, materials or services) in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may include additional computers to enable additional computers per classroom, electronic whiteboards, school nurse, maintenance handyman;
    - Contributions donations to the school for a general purpose or;
    - Contributions to the library and building trust fund (approved by the Australian Taxation Office and tax deductible);

- All essential items must be paid for before optional items, unless approved by the principal

- This policy aims to ensure that: students are not treated differently, denied access to the standard curriculum program, or refused instruction on the basis of payments not being made for education items, services or voluntary financial contributions;

- Under no circumstances can collectors of any type, including debt collectors, be used to obtain any funds from parents/guardians.

- The Federal Government Education Tax Refund (2008/2009 budget) allows eligible families to claim up to 50% deduction up to $750 ($375 refund) per child for school textbook materials including textbooks, stationary and learning materials which will be represented by our Essential items component of parent payments; and

- Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items can access a range of support options including:
  - The **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)** which is means tested and is paid through Centrelink to the school and parent. Parents must register for EMA twice a year on Centrelink forms. One half of the EMA is paid directly to the parents and guardians, and the other half of the EMA is paid directly to the school to expend on behalf of the student following consultation with the parent/guardian. For more information, see [http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ema/schools.htm](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/ema/schools.htm)
The School Start Bonus was introduced by the Victorian Government in 2006 to assist parents and guardians of Prep and Year 7 students in meeting the start-up costs of sending their child to school. The initiative provides financial assistance to families for expenditure on school and sporting uniforms, school bags, books and related expenses. For more information, see http://www.education.vic.gov.au/aboutschool/lifeatschool/financialservices.htm

Access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the principal to assist with clothing/uniforms.

Policy Implementation

- A minimum of six weeks notice (in accordance with DEECD Policy) should be given to allow parents/guardians sufficient time to make payment;
- Parents will be given an option to make payments for materials and services to be used either at the end of the year prior to the year payments relate to or at the commencement of the school year;
- Term planners will be issued at the beginning of each term outlining all optional extras associated with that term;
- The school will ensure that all communication with parents about education items, including requests for payment, is fair and reasonable and will be accompanied by the following information:
  - that parents/guardians are required to provide essential education items for their children, and have the option of purchasing these through the school or through a local supplier, where appropriate;
  - the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution;
  - the availability of alternative payment options for parents who are experiencing financial difficulties and an invitation to contact the Principal if the parent wishes to discuss these;
  - details of how payments or contributions will be spent by the school; and
  - a copy of this policy is available on the website or through the school office.
- Items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed;
- Six weeks prior to the end of the previous school year, parents/guardians will be provided with notice of requests for payment of essential education items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions;
- Parents/guardians are aware of support services available such as Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), School Start Bonus and State Schools Relief;
- Parents/guardians will be informed of how the school’s portion of the EMA will be used for their child’s education. It will not be used to offset voluntary financial contributions;
- Families in receipt of the EMA will not be pressured to sign over their portion of the EMA;
- Any portion of the EMA not expended by the end of the year will be returned to the parent/guardian or, by agreement, carried over into the next year;
- The Business Manager will remind parents of EMA register dates to ensure eligible families are registered for payments;
- Sensitivity and confidentiality will be exercised to the differing financial circumstances of individual students and their families;
- Administrative and financial processes are compliant with Departmental requirements such as CASES 21 financial reporting;
- Invoices for unpaid essential education items or optional items accepted by parents will be generated and distributed on a regular basis by the Business Manager, but not more than once a month;
- Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice is sent to all parents/guardians;
- Parents will be issued with a receipt clearly separating essential educational items from other payments for tax refund purposes;
- Principals must ensure any record of payments, contributions or non-payment by parents is kept confidential;
- It is not an option to withhold access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level as a condition of payment of essential education items, optional extras or voluntary financial contributions; and
- The Principal will ensure that all staff are familiar with and adhere to this policy.

Evaluation

- This Parent Payment Policy will be reviewed as part of the School Council’s policy review cycle.

Policy Area: Finance

Ratified School Council: June 2010

Next Review: 2013